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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 007153

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/02/2016

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SUBJECT: TOGO: GILCHRIST OLYMPIO'S OCTOBER 23 MEETING
WITH AMBASSADOR DUNN

Classified By: Acting DCM Josiah Rosenblatt, 1.4 (b/d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: UFC leader Gilchrist Olympio on October 23 told visiting U.S. Ambassador to Togo David Dunn that the UFC would be willing to participate in Togo's government of national unity under certain conditions, such as naming a UFC member to head a notional new ministry charged with oversight of democratization in Togo, consistent with the August 20 Global Political Agreement ("the Agreement"). Olympio repeatedly accused the Faure regime of not complying with the Agreement, most notably in forming a new interim government unilaterally, and said that it seemed clear that Faure did not want the UFC to participate in the government. Olympio and his associates also pressed for consensus-based decision-making in the CENI electoral commission (to counter the regime's numerical superiority in that body) and the rapid formation of the oversight commission ("groupe de suivi") that was supposed to be formed after the signing of the Agreement. Noting that they were not now contesting the Faure regime, they also said that they would accept the results of the planned June 24, 2007, legislative elections, so long as these elections were transparent and fair. If they lost fairly, they would stand down. Gilchrist and company asked the U.S. to intervene with the Faure government to obtain its agreement to the UFC's positions and thereby enable it to participate in the government, and asked for a significant U.S. presence to observe the legislative elections. Ambassador Dunn at numerous points reiterated the USG's continuing intention to promote democratization in Togo and he encouraged Olympio and the UFC to make a positive contribution to that effort. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) UFC leader Gilchrist Olympio hosted a meeting October 23 with U.S. Ambassador to Togo David Dunn (in transit to Lome). Olympio's associates Eric Amerding and G. Latevi Lawson were also present, along with Embassy Africa Watchers. During the four-hour discussion, Olympio reviewed the twists and turns of Togo's politics and his and the UFC's policies, centered mainly on the August 20 Global Political Agreement ("the Agreement"), the period from Eyadema's death to the present, and the question of whether the UFC would agree to participate in the interim government the Faure regime has put in place in conformity with the accords. Throughout the meeting, Olympio alternately displayed disdain, anger, frustration, bitterness, bemusement, resignation, and cautious optimism as he discussed Togo, his political fortunes, the Gnassingbe clan, and Faure, underscoring his emotion of the moment by his repeated references to Faure as "the boy" or "le garcon." During his discourse, Olympio frequently mentioned such figures as Kofi Annan and Presidents Obasanjo and Kufuor, among others, with all of whom he suggested he was on close terms and whose support and sympathy he believed he enjoyed.

WILLING TO PARTICIPATE BUT OBSTACLES ABOUND

13. (C) Olympio's main point was his willingness to agree to UFC participation in the interim national unity government (provided certain conditions were met), although he said that he personally could hardly accept a position, given the circumstances. UFC participation so far had been impossible, for which he blamed the Faure government and its failure, in his view, to abide by the Agreement. In addition to specific measures Faure had failed to honor, Faure had not lived up to certain "unwritten understandings" Olympio claimed the two sides had undertaken when the Agreement was signed and which would have provided certain assurances to the opposition on its role in government. One of these "understandings," Olympio asserted, was an agreement that, in return for ceasing to question Faure's legitimacy, the UFC would be allowed to propose a Prime Minister for the national unity government. Olympio said that Faure's refusal to comply with the Agreement and honor this understanding, along with the naming of an interim government without sufficient consultation, was the reason the UFC had not joined the government. He stressed that Faure's naming of Yawovi Agboyibo, who heads an opposition party sometimes allied with the UFC, as Prime Minister, had violated the "understanding" with the UFC.

14. (C) Olympio said that Faure's claim to be operating under Article 66 of the Constitution (concerning the president's power to appoint and dismiss officials) was also disingenuous, given the provisions of the Agreement, which he suggested took precedence. Olympio said he had discussed the matter with Burkina Faso President Compaore, who reportedly agreed that this was "not normal." Olympio said that neither he nor Compaore had received a response from the Faure regime

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on this point after recently bringing it to the regime's attention. In Olympio's view, this was one example of how Faure was seeking to marginalize Compaore, who had done a good job under difficult circumstances and had proved his ability to act independently.

15. (C) Olympio said that the Faure regime should have established the oversight commission ("groupe de suivi") before acting to form the new electoral commission (CENI). The regime was refusing to name an opposition figure as head of the CENI and preferred that he or she be elected by commission members. This would only guarantee a regime victory, Olympio complained, since the CENI was numerically tilted towards the regime. There was also a question of provincial election boards -- according to a new law, only magistrates could head these boards, and the government had recently appointed about 100 new magistrates. The regime's manipulation of the CENI and its subsidiaries meant that the need to reach decisions by consensus (rather than by majority vote) was greater than ever, Olympio and Amerding stressed. Lawson said that the opposition favored consensus not as a means to block action but as a way to encourage creative thinking to resolve differences.

16. (C) Olympio said that the oversight commission ("groupe de suivi") would consist of nine people, six representing Togo's political parties and observers from ECOWAS, the EU, and Burkina Faso, with President Compaore serving as its chairman. Olympio described efforts on Compaore's part to establish the commission, to which the Faure regime had not responded. Olympio and his associates stressed the need for the oversight commission to be established soon. Amerding said that the opposition had proposed that the U.S. be included in the oversight commission but that had been rejected.

LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS A KEY

17. (C) Olympio said that despite these problems, the UFC

would continue to press for free and fair legislative elections in June 2007. (NOTE: The CENI has officially named June 24 as the date. END NOTE.) These elections, and how the regime prepared for them, would be an extremely important indicator of the regime's intentions, Olympio and his associates emphasized. They said that if the elections were free and fair, and if Faure's side prevailed, they would accept the results. But it was crucial that all parties, including interested non-Togolese, try to ensure the fairness and transparency of the elections. Olympio requested that the U.S. send as many election observers as it could. Ambassador Dunn noted that several U.S.-based groups routinely send elections observers and he expected that they would do so in Togo's case, whether funded by the Embassy or not. He reiterated U.S. support for democratization in Togo and that it would continue to press for free and fair legislative elections.

STRONG REQUEST FOR U.S. PRESSURE

18. (C) As the lengthy meeting began drawing to a close, Olympio and his associates increasingly focused on the role they hoped the U.S. could and would play in influencing events in Togo. Along with their requests for a significant presence as election observers, they asked that the U.S. intervene directly with the Faure regime, both to insist on adherence to the Agreement and to press for the regime's acceptance of the opposition's positions. If the regime showed flexibility towards the opposition, then the UFC could agree to participate in the government. Olympio and his associates referred to the UFC's earlier demand for "two big and two small ministries" but said that the UFC could accept a position as "minister of state" in charge of a new GOT "ministry for implementation of the Agreement" (not well defined but clearly distinct from the oversight committee outlined in the Agreement). "Offering us just the Youth and Sports Ministry, will not be enough to get us back in," Olympio scoffed.

19. (C) Ambassador Dunn, while remaining non-committal on some of Olympio's specific points, repeated that the U.S. would continue to support a broad-based, inclusive process of democratization in Togo, and would continue to make this point in its dealings with the Faure regime, both privately and in its public diplomacy. He encouraged Olympio, the UFC, and the rest of the opposition to seek ways to play a constructive and positive role, reminding them that with Eyadema's passing and the emergence of Faure, there was now an opportunity for positive change that had not existed for a

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generation and that all parties should take care not to waste.

110. (C) COMMENT: The meeting was a friendly one, with Olympio generally alert and incisive, although he often digressed, showed signs of advancing age (both physically and mentally), and periodically fixated on the injustices he and his family had endured for decades. As in our previous meetings, he displayed both defiance and resignation, and he seemed to appreciate that his animus towards Faure could never be the same as his animus towards Eyadema, with whom he would never be able to settle his family's score. Amerding and Lawson intervened effectively, but, along with their leader, they seemed to realize that Faure, fairly or not, had stepped on the gas while the light was still yellow and that they were already in danger of being a lap down. END COMMENT.

111. (U) Ambassador Dunn has cleared this message.

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